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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE END, AND THE MEANS.

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."—MATT. x. 34-38.

If you consider that this is a part of the commission of Christ when he was sending his disciples forth, and that it is in some sense, therefore, a proclamation made to the world of the new dispensation that was coming upon the earth, it must be regarded as one of the most extraordinary things that ever was uttered. Men are accustomed, when they introduce new affairs, to suppress every possible disadvantage that is connected with them; to smooth down all difficulties; to put the fairest aspect forward; to give every explanation with the most solicitous particularity, so that men may not be repelled. But here the Messenger of the new covenant, bringing good news from heaven to earth, from God to men, and establishing a dispensation which proposes to itself nothing less than the work of a God on the whole earth, and through all time, makes proclamation, not of ease, not of victory, not of a straight and smooth road: he heaps up before men almost everything that they hate and dread, and seems to strike at the things which men do most enjoy, and love, and guard.

Is there anything that all the world over is more consecrated than one's own household? and yet, in a parallel passage, men are told to hate it.

SUNDAY MORNING, Nov. 8, 1874. LESSON: Matt. x. 6-28. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 40, 648, "Shining Shore."

"If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Here it is declared,

"He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Standing in this connection, and in connection with other things, it seems exactly as if it were a stroke at the family. It is something to be sacrificed for the sake of following this new Leader. When men enter upon a revolution or a campaign, there is always some prospect of victory, some hope of booty, some release, or some attainment that lies beyond and is to be the consequence or culmination of their endeavors, so that they are nerved by the expectation of good to come; but what says he? "I do not come to bring peace. I come to bring a sword. I come to bring not union, but division, in the family. A man's foes shall be distinctively there." Ordinarily the house is a refuge. A man expects to find rivals, enemies, in the world; but when he goes back home, there he expects to find confidence and friendship. Here, however, we are told that, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

"I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law [which might not require much!]. A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

This is the commission. It is the instruction with which they were sent out into the community. You recollect, too, that this is the dispensation which was ushered in by the angel-song, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

Did Christ think what he was saying? Did he mean to say that? It is a mistake. It is no such thing. It is as if he had said, "You are not to expect peace on earth; you are not to expect good will among men: I come for an entirely different purpose." And if he came for this purpose, what sort of good news was it that he brought? He came to make divisions—of which there were enough already. He came to set men against each other in ten thousand forms of oppressive modes of treatment or wars. He came to bring a sword, when a million swords were flashing already. It seems

very strange ; and it must seem especially strange to all those persons who have been accustomed to talk about the teaching of our Lord as being so simple and plain.

But there never was on earth a teacher whose instruction was couched in such figurative language as that of Jesus. There is nowhere else to be found—not even in the poets—such a continual necessity of translation in order to come at the root of truth as there is in his teaching. If you take these words literally they will land you just where the Sermon on the Mount would if you took that literally ; and if you were to take the Sermon on the Mount, as men are made and must be for generations to come, and follow it literally, it would bankrupt and revolutionize and destroy the world, unquestionably.

What is, then, our escape from the apparent difficulty that there is in this instruction ? When we look at a system with complex development we have a right to look at it in either of two ways : we may look at it as the final result, as the thing that is to be accomplished ; or we may look at the method by which that final result or thing is to be brought about. You can look at the end, or you can look at the instrument. You can look at the history, or the consummation of that history. You can look at the tree in the summer during the period of budding, and leaving, and blossoming, and immaturity, or in autumn, when every bough is bent with purfled fruit.

Now, our Master in this passage looked simply at the process ; for he was speaking to men, and he consulted their ordinary interests—men whose vice was shortsightedness ; men who refused to take a large, long look at their own existence ; men who rejected the spiritual idea ; men who asked for some immediate benefit from his new ministration. Before he was half through that ministration there came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, who said, “Grant, Lord [there is nothing more affecting than the solicitude of a mother for her children] that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” They had come out and become his disciples ; and they felt that it was about time (for they had

been with him a few months) that they should begin to reap some material benefit ; so, hearing something in regard to his breaking forth into a kingdom, they wanted to take time by the forelock and secure places in this kingdom. If John, for instance, had been made Secretary of State, and James Secretary of the Treasury, why, the family would have found it very much to their interest to be pious !

All through there was precisely the same thing. The disciples wanted loaves and fishes ; they wanted palaces ; they wanted raiment for the body ; and the Master was obliged to check them, saying, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man [I, that am your Lord, the Son of God] hath not where to lay his head.” He put it to them, whether it ought not to satisfy the disciples that they were as their Lord. He taught them not to seek the bread that perisheth. In multiplied instances he dissuaded them from fixing their hearts on outward things. He said to them on one occasion, “Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed ? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.” He gave them to understand that they were entering upon a dispensation whose genius was interior, spiritual—not exterior, physical. All along he was obliged to rebuke the desires of the disciples for that which was present, and present to the lower life and sense. And he said to them, finally, “Go and preach.” As they were carnal, dim-eyed, low-minded, it was necessary, in some way or other, as it were to stamp or burn into their minds the impression that they were not going out to establish a kingdom that was to have its rewards right at hand, or within reach of the arms. They were going to establish a different kind of kingdom.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword.”

In other words, “Do not think that human nature everywhere is going to smooth itself down, and that everybody will receive you with open arms. You are going into the battle-field. You are going where there is to be trouble. You will find that your preaching of sweet affections will breed quarrels ; you will find that your preaching of the

domination of the noble feelings over the ignoble will bring revolt ; you will find that your preaching to men that they are more than animals will make them worse than animals ; and you will find that if you teach men that they are to be good one to another, they will fall on each other, and gnash their teeth at each other."

He was saying, " Go, preach this kingdom without the expectation that you will reap immediately what ultimately will be derived from it." There is peace—the angels were right ; there are fruits—the expectation of them is justified ; but they are to be the final results to which men shall come through struggle, through pain, through long endeavor. Leisure after strife ; victory after battle ; fruit after long culture and growing—not at the beginning.

Regarded in this large way, the passage is not only consonant with all the representations in the New Testament of the fruit of the Spirit, and with the annunciations made, but it is also consonant with the scientific views of the present day. It is an indistinct and obscure way of declaring the unfolding of things—the gradual development, progress and final consummation of the moral and spiritual life on earth.

There is a distinction between the nature of a quality or condition, and the road or process by which we come to it. A quality in and of itself may be joyful, but the earning of it may be very painful.

So, then, it is proper to say, figuratively, that a religious life is a joyful life—that is, that its final fruit is joy ; and at the same time that men who enter upon a religious life enter upon a painful life.

It may be true that intelligence will be a source of unbounded satisfaction ; but I take it that no boy when he goes to school thinks that the first taste of intelligence gives much satisfaction. It would be a matter of very great pleasure to every one to know how to read ; but when a person—especially if he has let childhood go by—first attempts to read, reading is not so pleasant. The early educatory steps toward intellectual or moral states frequently are painful steps. They require patience, they require faith, they require self-denial, they sometimes require positive suffering ; but the

ends which we are seeking by these steps are “ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.”

According, then, as you look at things as ripe or green, you may use language at one time that is very opposite from that which is used at another time, and both will be true. For instance, it would be proper to speak of grapes as you see them in the summer as being sour and small, and not fit for the mouth; and it would be equally proper for you to speak of those grapes as you see them in September and October as being luscious, inviting, and rewarding. The autumnal grapes are one thing; the summer grapes are another thing. And that which is true of grapes is true of moral qualities.

Let us look at this necessity of conflict and trouble as we see it actually in life, and as it is intimated in the word of our Master. In building up the house of the soul in each individual, it may be said that the work of soul-building is a work of painfulness, of mortification, of annoyance, of fear, of doubt. If you single out all the pain-bearing elements that go to constitute soul-building, you can make the picture like midnight, and it will be justified by fact; and yet, will it represent fairly a process of soul-building? Look at the building of a house. What a choice place is a completed house, fitted to the wants of a household—a house of suitable size, erected with thoroughness, furnished in good taste, cool for the summer, warm for the winter, surrounded by objects of beauty! What a delight it is, for social reasons and for scenic reasons! How poets love to descant upon it! We employ the experience of home to picture the state of heavenly rest. From our life in the household we describe the ideal future life. In saying this I do not exaggerate.

Suppose a son wants a house? I describe to him a commodious and comfortable mansion, and he says, “I will build it.” He goes out with the idea which he has derived from my statement, and he says, “Now for a house”; and the first step toward a house is to clear off the ground; but he grumbles, and says that does not exactly comport with the idea which he has formed of the beauty of a house. I should say to him, “Think not that I have come to instantly create

for you a house of down and plush and velvet." There must be a good deal of grubbing and digging ; and it is laborious business to grub and dig. The foundation is to be laid ; and to lay the foundation of a house in moist, cold, frigid weather is not pleasant. There is to be a great deal of filth and dirt ; and that is very unpleasant to one who has set out to build with an ideal of neatness in his mind. The grounds are strewed with lumber and shavings and bricks. And when the house goes up above the foundations the wind whistles through it, and it is just the reverse of our conception of a delightful, comfortable home. When, by and by, the windows are in, and the external wind no more has free course to run and be glorified there, the house is damp, and the floor is stained with mortar, and you go stumbling over planks and boards, and everything is inconvenient and disagreeable. All manner of confusion reigns throughout the structure. And when, after a little everlasting, you turn out the masons and carpenters and painters, then come the scourers, and all things have to be cleaned ; and though cleanliness is good, cleaning is not. Then come the decorators, and the walls and ceilings have to be gone over. Then comes the upholsterer ; and we say to ourselves, " Shall we ever get these pests out of the house !" Every builder knows that there is a great difference between building a house, and living in a house after it is built.

You can describe a house that is building as it is *to be* when it is built, and say that it is comely and beautiful, and people will not misinterpret your meaning. If a person should read a description of a completed house as Tennyson would give it in his melodious numbers ; if he should take the hint of a house as a sentimentalist would portray it, and were to start out to build a house with his eye fixed on that conception, yet knowing that the beautiful end must be reached by difficult means, every day as the work progressed he would see some mark of beauty that would answer exactly to the description.

Now, the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be transcendently beautiful ; but it will be at the last. While the soul-house is building it is anything but beautiful.

It is full of annoyances. That is one reason why we are obliged to live by faith and hope. That which is to be our solace and our reward is far more than that which we have actually gained. For example, we attempt while living in the body to control it for great spiritual reasons. We undertake the double duty of employing the senses for material life, and also of gradually transfiguring the material element, and converting it into sentiment, into spirituality, learning to live by the invisible rather than the visible ; and that, too while we are necessitated to maintain vigor and power in the lower life and nature. It is a glorious conception that one shall so live, born of matter, and unfolding in physical respects, that the spiritual germ shall assert sovereignty in spite of all the distinctively evil elements in the flesh, all the time gaining ground in the work of building up a noble interior house—a house indeed not made with hands, adorned with noble thoughts, with magnificent passages of experience, with all heroism of feeling, with friendships, with tastes, with refinements, with benevolences, with hopes, with faiths, with joys, inspiring the life so that at last it moves by the interior while it is yet moving by the exterior. A man in the world, dealing with it, being dealt with by it, and yet building within himself a household of pure thought, noble aspiration, holy endeavor, and divine commerce—can any one fail to admire such a person ? Can any one help revering a perfected nature, a glorious soul ? And yet can it be expected that such a nature or such a soul can be realized at the beginning ? It can be attained ; but not without patience, and cross-bearing, and yoke-bearing, and pain, and trouble. Both things are true in everybody's experience. Nobody is born into the kingdom of God from the flesh instantly. No one rises at once from the lower life to the higher as on eagles' wings. I do not say that one may not come instantly to a perception of truth, and to a consciousness of its reality. I believe there is such a thing as moral suffusion and inspiration which materially changes things ; but who ever was born into the kingdom of God instantly, though he had the best temperament, though he had a harmonious mind, though he was surrounded by the most propitious circumstances, and though he was

under the most immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost ? Was there ever a man converted so that afterwards he had no patience to exercise, no virtue to cultivate, no drill to go through, no sorrow to undergo, no bereavements to bear, no losses to endure, no thwartings of his pride to put up with, no temptations of selfishness to withstand, no proffers to his vanity to resist, nothing that should tend to make him like the world's men ? Whoever is born into the new kingdom has to work for it. A man may rejoice ; he may sing many songs : he may strive and sing at the same time ; but nevertheless no man ever builds up a regenerated character except through struggles and annoyances and patient endurance. He has joys on the way if he is faithful in his endeavors ; yet, after all, he meets with trials which justify the declaration of the Master when he said, " Think not that I am come to send peace : I came to send disturbance, excitement."

If this be so in the individual, how much more of necessity must it be so where men are collective—where men, instead of being as the individual is, one that in some sense controls his own self, collectively attempt to build up that which is to be the result of concurrent wills, as, for instance, in the household. You might trace the progress of civilization, and of Christianity I had almost said, by the way in which the table is regarded in the family. If there is anything in the world that is animal, it is eating. Every day, and three times a day, to convoke a whole household around a table to eat, is one of the most physical of things. If there is anything that pulls a man right down and back to the level of the beast again, it is eating and drinking. Where you see it in a savage, in a barbarous, or in a semi-civilized state, it is essentially, in all its accompaniments, an animal operation. Conceive how the old warriors, the old barons, in German forests held victorious feasts and gorged themselves with meat and drink, and became drunk with wine, and filled the night with revelry. This was their highest ideal of life. Vast leonine natures were they, who enjoyed only the utmost physical excitement on the field, and then indulged in the lowest conceivable form of animal enjoyment in the house.

Now, trace that all the way down to our day, in which,

when the morning summons comes, the mother descends, with a face like the rising sun in the east, full of sweetness and full of balm ; and then the children come down, hand in hand, the little ones carried or led by the larger ones, all frolicking ; and the father sits at the head of the table, and discourses, first with God in thanksgiving, and then with his loved ones, and, in a spirit of kindness, wit and repartee are mingled with the conversation, and all the family are enveloped in an atmosphere of affection and joyfulness. At length it has come to pass that all our best thoughts and feelings cluster about the table, and we have almost forgotten that there is any animalism connected with the act of eating. You used to have enough that was good to eat—particularly on Thanksgiving day, when especial bounties covered the board ; and yet when you think of father and mother at the household table you think not of eating, but of love. Eating in the family has been so spiritualized, it has been so transformed, that it has become poetic ; it has become a sentiment. The very lowest point in household economy has been so exalted by the development around about it of loves, and tastes, and inspirations, and refinements, that it has ceased to bring the slightest animal conception ; and if I am invited to tea, it is my friends that I am going to eat—not the food. If a friend invites me to dine with him at his house, it is a banquet of friendship that I go to. It is conversation that I go for—not bread, nor meat, nor wine, nor viands of any kind. These are not to be despised altogether, but they are certainly subordinate ; and they are so covered with blessed memories that they are well nigh forgotten. Woe be to that man who thinks oftener and more about his soup, and fish, and meats, and confections, and fruits, and wines and coffee, than about the social delights of his friend's house, or his own. He scarcely would be long a guest in any refined family. How have men learned to subdue the animal appetites, which are the most urgent and indispensable, and to clothe them, and train them to higher and nobler uses, so that they have ceased to be animal, so that when you speak of them they mean something higher—so that when you mention them *meat* means soul-meat, *bread*

means thought-bread, and all agreeable beverages mean inspirations of friendship !

In the building of the household, whether you look at it historically in the race-form or individually in the way in which things actually happen, the conception, the final idea, is entrancing, and one longs for such a consummation ; but is it a thing so easy to be done ? Is it so easy to bring up all the children so that they shall know how to harmonize with each other ? Is it easy to bring them up so that those who are superior and those who are subordinate shall work harmoniously together ? Is it easy to do it in larger families or small communities ? Is it easy there to exalt the individuals so that ten or twenty children shall live harmoniously ? Is it easy in a larger sphere to organize society itself so that men shall act on a plane of higher motives ? The lower forms of society we know are animal, bestial ; but as society is developed, and grows complex, and men seek more comprehensive ends, multiplying their emotions and aspirations, it becomes more and more difficult for them to live together. It is a slow and not easy work to teach men collectively to make good neighborhoods, and then out of good neighborhoods to make good communities or states ; and then out of good communities or states to make good nations ; and finally, to make the races, round and round the globe, cohere and interact upon each other by the higher Gospel principles. It is coming ; but the road has been a rough one. Men have been polished by the hardest.

I often pick up from the soil in plowing (other men plow, and I pick up) a rounded stone, perfectly smooth. As I look at it an unclasped volume suggests itself. How came that stone so round ? On the beach it has rolled and rolled for ages. Thrice ten thousand times torrents have turned it over and over and over again. It has been polished by rude violences. At last it rests in the soil, and I find it. It was not made round all at once. It has been rounded by the attrition of centuries. Ages have been employed in smoothing it.

As we go into life we find beneficent customs, and wise laws and policies. Where did they come from ? Did they

drop down out of heaven ? No ; they came out of the woods, from savage men, through wars and insurrections. Prisons have taught men the value of liberty. Blood has cried out for humanity ; tears have flowed in streams by which the iniquities of men have been gradually washed away ; and we have come to even the imperfect betterment of modern civilization through toil, and wretchedness, and bondage, and the clanking of chains, and despotism, and the hardness of men. These things have taught men and developed them through long ages. Why God has dealt with the race as he has he never told me. I do not think he has told anybody else, though some think he has. These, however, are facts. Such is the way the race has gone and is going along the Via Dolorosa of tears and suffering. The whole world groans and travails in pain until now, and people say, "What is the matter?" I simply say, It is in accordance with the declaration of our Master, who said, "I did not come to give you instant peace ; I did not come to give the full blessing of the gospel of deliverance at once : I came to bring the sword, to bring division, to bring trouble."

Whenever you bring out of a lower range of thought or faculty a higher ideal, there is a birth-process. Nothing is born into a higher state without birth-cries and birth-throes. Every time you go to animalism with something nobler than itself, that moment it begins to suffer, and must suffer.

I stood on the top of Amherst tower, and looked over all the great Connecticut valley. How tranquil it was ! How beautiful it seemed ! It was night,—the night of early morning,—and the mist like silver lay in the most perfect tranquillity. If night had always brooded over it, perhaps it never would have been disturbed ; and it was not until the sun came up, and light and warmth began to strike in, that slowly there were seen mighty undulations, and little by little the mass broke up into cloud-forms ; and these, as the light and warmth grew stronger, gradually rose in wreaths and disappeared. If the sun had kept down, I know not but that the fog would have remained forever ; but the moment the morning light struck its rays through it, as if in torment it writhed and passed away.

So it is with ignorance, and all the lower forms of human experience. So long as they lie in darkness they are content and do not suffer; but the moment you let the light of civilization and Christianity into them, instantly there is suffering, and they lift themselves little by little, and sway hither and thither, and give place to something brighter and better.

The view which I have thus briefly illustrated ought to give us a new conception, in the first place, of the methods of divine providence in relation to human society and the ends to be gained. We are too apt to suppose that national life, as it is founded in the necessities of the individual and of men collectively, is of God in such a sense that God gave laws directly, instead of giving a nature that would itself evolve laws. We are apt to wonder why God has permitted oppressive and despotic governments; but if it be true that God gives the seed, and stimulates its growth, and it is obliged to develop itself through various stages, it is just as true that all national life has developed itself through various stages.

The conflict that has taken place has not been economical; there has been more suffering than was necessary for the results that have been gained; men have been ignorant of the reasons of distress and suffering; the world have been left to find out the best way they could, and it has been a stumbling way at best; mankind have learned by blunders and tentative processes; the world has lived empirically, and it has stumbled like a blind man; and communities and nations have gone through wide circuits when they might with a few steps have traveled the same distance. They have turned again and again upon their own paths, working up by spirals almost endlessly extended; and if you were to look simply upon the outer forms of human society, and were to believe that there is an immediate Providence, and that God is working for quick ends, it would minister to skepticism; but if you believe, on the other hand, in the genius that lies hidden in our text—namely, that the final end is divine, and that the intermediate steps are to evolve themselves—there will be reason for hope and confidence. There is a Power that watches over races and nations; and

the end will be glorious ; but the intermediate stages may be tempestuous. All we have a right to ask is, that the consummation of things shall be satisfying.

If the other extreme is stormy, if there is to be a final result that is to be forever darker than midnight, and fiercer than whirlwinds in the tropics, then we have no philosophy that can account for the condition of things here ; but if the world is working its way, slowly it may be, with needless suffering perhaps, but nevertheless to a grand consummation in the future that will be satisfying, then we can account in a measure for the intermediate steps, and can be patient with them. All that we want is to know that the building shall go up, and that what is rude now shall be symmetrical and perfect then.

Even the church has been subject to precisely the same law that has fallen upon the individual, upon the family, upon communities, and upon nations. The truth itself was not born all at once. All truth was not born with Adam, or with Abraham, or with Isaac, or with Jacob. Some truths have come from them that might as well have been still-born. All truth was not born with our Saviour. He did not tell us everything. What he did tell us we do not take in fully ; and why should he tell us more ? It would not have fallen upon minds that could have comprehended it. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” There is, and there can be, no reason for having a revelation that transcends the capacity of men to understand.

We have our senses of sight, of smell, of taste, of hearing and of touch ; and suppose there were two other senses that we had not ; suppose there were other doors through which knowledge came into the mind ; and suppose there should be a revelation, a knowledge of which could come into our minds only through those undeveloped doors, what use would that revelation be to us ? What use would be a revelation of something that should be different from anything that appeals to our sense of hearing, or smelling, or tasting, or feeling or seeing ? Such a revelation would be thrown away upon us. And an inspired revelation is limited to the capacity to receive of the person to whom it is sent.

All truth was not, therefore, revealed in the first seed-forms. The good of heaven, we are told by the Master himself, is like the smallest of all seeds, that of the oriental mustard ; but when it is grown it becomes a tree large enough for the birds to lodge in its branches.

The truths of an early period, in their animal form, have gone on developing and developing and developing ; and it is the misunderstanding of them at the present day that leads to such charges and recriminations as are indulged in between man and man. I preach to you certain truths which I find involved in experience, in society, in history ; I preach to you the explanation of things that go far beyond the words of the Book ; and people say, " You ought to stand by the word and testimony ; you ought to stick to the Bible ; you have no right to go out of it and teach of moral things."

But I say that the Bible is full of seed—divine truths that are merely in the seed-form. In order to understand them we must look and see how they grow, and not depend for our knowledge of them upon any philosophizing about them. The thing itself is what we want to see. The Bible cannot tell me what regeneration is. It can tell me that there is regeneration, that it is a great change, and that it leads a man from a lower to a higher plane ; but if I would know what the actual thing is I must experience it in myself. A man who undertakes to learn moral truths by reading the Bible and nothing else is like a man who undertakes to go as captain or navigator to Asia in a steamship, and never goes out of the cabin to look at the stars, or winds, or currents, but only looks at the chart. Now, the chart is not meant to be the ocean itself : it is meant to be simply an index of what there is on the ocean ; and if the chart says, " There is a rock," a man is a fool to be satisfied with seeing the picture when he can look over the bow and see the rock and avoid it.

The light of God spoken of in the Bible shines from the divine soul to sustain the child, the aged, all people, in their different vicissitudes ; it is working in its own way, is bringing out in vital forms faith, and hope, and courage, and elements of civilization of every kind ; but these qualities are not in the Bible. The Bible says " Babies" ; but there are

not any babies in the Bible. The Bible says "Men"; where are the armies, and where are the citizens? They are outside of it and must be sought there.

Look at the church, and the truths that have been preached by the church. What have been the facts? I know that many persons think the church in primitive times was perfect. That is as absurd as to suppose that Adam was a perfect man in the garden of Eden. There never was a boy yet that knew anything without learning it. There never was a man that was informed at the start, having had no training nor experience. Adam a perfect man? A perfect Adam, without instruction or experience, or anything whatever? He must have been a different sort of man from any that we know anything about or ever dreamed of. When we attempt to make our children perfect we bring them up very different by from the way in which he was brought up; and yet we think it possible for a man to have been perfect whose faculties had no education, who was constantly without experience, and who came to full vitality and maturity without saying or doing anything worth recording, except to mind his wife and be kicked out of Paradise. The life of a perfect man consist in doing wrong? Why, it is a dream. It is a vision of the fancy. There is no such perfection as that.

Well, in a subsequent age, was that perfection unfolded in the patriarchs? Were Isaac and Jacob perfect? They were venerable; they were magnificent figure-heads of the past; by ancient nations they were regarded as heroes, and they were heroes as compared with the men around about them; but Jacob's conduct certainly will not bear investigation. His dealings with his brother and his father-in-law cannot be justified. Neither can his treatment of neighboring nations about him. Bismarck is not a circumstance to him.

If you come further down, and look at the history of the Jewish church, was there any perfect development of religious life, or any perfect unfolding of spiritual truth, by that church?

If you come still further down, to the time of our Saviour, the one man above all men, the divine man, and look at the

church that he is supposed to have framed, was there any perfection brought forth? But he had no church in his own life-time. He was a Jew. He worshiped in the temple and in the synagogue like any other Jew. And the disciples did the same thing. For forty years those Christians who were in Palestine continued to be a part of the Jewish church. And it is that early period that men look back to as perfect. It was as rude as it could be. It was subject to precisely the same law of development through experience that this age is. The knowledge of men at that time was very small, and their moral sense was very small. Look at the epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle had to instruct men that incest was not a virtue, that getting drunk at the Lord's Supper was wrong, and ten thousand other things that we should be ashamed to mention in a Bible class; and are they to be held up as models of perfection? For three hundred years those questions on which a man's orthodoxy depends to-day were not agitated, and had no existence.

The church has been developing in spite of itself; but its greatest efforts have been to take and keep a fixed form. Such a policy pursued with a tree would make it impossible for it to grow. The moment you fix things and make them permanent, you reduce them to the level of a stone. Stones do not grow, but living things do; and a church, in its teachings and economies, should unfold a new light by growing. It is a shame if, after generations, experience does not bring us into life at a higher point.

People say, "Do you suppose you are wiser than your father was?" I ought to be. God meant that I should be, or else I should not have had a father whose advantages were transmitted to me.

Do I despise the lower steps because they are at the bottom and not at the top? No. I value them as a means of getting higher; but some men would sit down on the lower steps, and say, "These stairs are so sacred that I am not going to leave them."

If man, by this false view, this erroneous philosophy of life and growth and of the incipient conditions of development as compared with the ideal and final conditions, is

thrown into skepticism and doubt, it seems to me that every noble soul ought to find a way back again; and I think that in these declarations of our Master we are not simply to say, "These are metaphorical; they are extravagant; we cannot understand them": we are rather to apply to them the light of history and experience, and make them personally useful to ourselves.

Now, the whole human race, human nature, religion, Christian character—these are all subject to the same law of growth, of trouble and of suffering. When I ask you to come into the kingdom of God I do not ask you to come into sorrow, but I know you will have to go through more or less sorrow. We are to remember, however, that the fidelity of the ancestors is transmitted to the posterity. As God has visited the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations, so also the virtues of our ancestors have been accumulating, and coming down to us, and giving us a better starting ground, a better chance, more facility; and it is for us to be grateful for the blessings we enjoy, and avail ourselves of them as helps by which to rise to a higher plane than our fathers, with their more limited light and knowledge, could reach.

The struggles of all men are not alike. But somewhere you will have to struggle. Every man finds trials of his own at the point at which he is brought into life. The accumulations of his ancestors, good or bad, are represented in him, and he has to take them, and go on and up as best he can. And the way is everlasting. The unfolding is infinite. His suffering may make him nobler and better, but he is going to suffer. He will have strife, and burden-bearing, and cross-bearing. The disciple is not better than the Master, who also suffered, and who was tempted in all points, yet without sin, that he might be a perfect Leader among the brethren, taking their nature, bearing as they bore, and unfolding as they unfolded. I do not, therefore, call you to immediate blessedness: I call you to attainment. I invite you to the commencement of Christian unfolding. I invite you to the beginning of that large manhood which includes conscience, honor, truth, love, sympathy and

aspiration, in all things—in family life, in friendship, in business, in Christian fellowship. Refuse to adopt low standards of duty. Exalt your conceptions of virtue. I have in my study the engraving of an altar-piece from one of the old German churches. The altar is of carved wood. On the front, as the central figure, is the exquisite form of the Virgin Mary looking sweet in her simplicity and celestial beauty. Above her is the typical form of a dove, representing the Holy Ghost. On the right and on the left are the Father and the Son. There are venerable, grand human figures looking with intent interest on the Virgin. Beneath are carved angels, and at the ends of the altar are the angels of the Annunciation and the Salutation. All around these is a vine. The whole is cut in oak; and the workmanship is most exquisite.

Now, I can imagine that, as the workmen, having completed this altar, were conveying it to the church, an old oak tree, looking at it, might have said, "Why, that is just what I have been desiring to be like. How beautiful it is!" "Thou mayest be like it," say the architect and artist. "Will you make me like that?" "Certainly." So some morning out goes the axman, and commences chopping at the root. Down looks the oak, and cries, "Stop!" "Why should I stop?" says the axman. "I am reserved." "Yes, you are reserved." "I am to be made into a magnificent altar-piece." "Yes, I know it." The axman still swings his ax, and down comes the two-hundred-years-old oak; and it moans, and groans, and says, "What a fool I was to want to be an altar-piece! I have always been told that aspiration would lead me into trouble, and here I am." Then comes the sawyer, and puts the rude ripping teeth of his saw on the tree, and says, "This is the way to glory;" and the old oak sighs, and says, "Fool that I am, I have got to take it." At last it is sawed into planks, and then it is put into a kiln and dried under fierce heats, till the oak does not know itself. And then, as if its torment would never end, when it is thoroughly dried, it is taken and, as if no respect were paid to its feelings, marked, and scratched, and scraped, and pierced, and gouged, and scooped, and scolloped; and at

length you begin to see the rude outlines of the figures ; and as the work goes on there are seen the faces, and there is the divine face, and here is the exquisite dove, and at last the oak says, "Lord, I perceive, I perceive ; not my will, but thine, be done." And ere long the altar is completed, and stands in the cathedral, and prayers are said before it, and God's people stand about it. Oh ! it is beautiful, but ah, what a road it had to go over ! Oh, the divinity that is in it ! but ah, the birth which led to that divinity !

You want to be noble, eminent Christians, do you ? Well, then, do not complain of the ax, of the saw, of the gouge, nor of the cutting knife. You are badgered here and there in life : what is the result ? I do not care so much that you go through suffering : what is it doing for you ? Is it making you better, or worse ? Is it making you hard and unyielding, or is it making you easy to be entreated and kind ? You are going through experiences which are like thorns piercing you : are they teaching you love and aspiration, and giving you a large sympathy for men ? Are they making you more pitiful and tender and helpful toward people who are below you, and are undeveloped ? Are they fitting you for the rest that remaineth for the people of God ? or, have you a dull content in munching your daily victuals ? Is suffering making you a man in Christ Jesus ? Have you a presage of the angelic state ? Have you a sense of things unseen and untaught ? Have you a willingness to live or die ? Is your life something more than the round horizon that you see here ? Are men your masters, or is God your Master ? Do you fear the devil, or so love yourself that the devil has no domination over you ? Are you a victor while you are conquered ? Are you a monarch while you are trodden down ?

By faith we reign. By hope we have eternal fruition. The fruits hang over the battlements, I know ; and the leaves for the healing of the nations are trouble, and bitterness, and disappointment. Are they making you better ? God knows, and you ought to know. If you are becoming better, thank God for trouble. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me," said Jesus, "for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

ALMIGHTY God, be gracious to these dear little children. Thou hast sent them forth as birds unfledged into the field and into the forest. Deliver them from their enemies. Let them not be overtaken and torn by cruel talons. We beseech of thee that their lives may be spared; that they may grow up in health, in strength of body, in strength of mind, and in strength of moral principles; that they may be good children, and a comfort to their parents in their age; that they may be virtuous citizens, and Christians that shall adorn the doctrine of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Give wisdom to these parents that they may be exercised in all patience, in all fidelity of instruction, and in all wisdom in their mode of teaching. Grant that their children and they may be united in a common hope; and growing in the nurture and admonition of the Lord may they twine about each other, and be as one vine. May all the households that are represented in this congregation be households of faith. Therein may the spirit of the Lord abide; and abiding, may there be peace, and light, and joy. If there come great trouble may it be borne in such a victorious way that in the end they shall be comforted and made glad.

We pray that thou wilt grant to all those who sit in darkness in their households the light of thy presence. Have compassion upon mourning fathers and mothers who are in deep affliction; upon those who are joined together in the sacred services of trouble, in the school of sorrow, where thou dost deal most faithfully with thy beloved. Grant that parents who thus walk before thee in the probation of eternal life may have comfort and consolation, and believe that thou wilt not consume them though the furnace be hot, nor suffer them to be swept away though the flood be strong.

Draw near to all those who are contesting their way in this world, burdened with care, overtaken by unexpected disasters and disappointments, bearing heavy burdens, and carrying yokes that are not easy. May they have manhood ministered to them. May it be a comfort to them to know that their heavenly Father thinketh of them, and that day by day the sources of their strength are supplied from on high. May they learn to be weaned from an inordinate love of things present. May they learn that here they have no abiding city. May they seek one that hath foundations far above the reach of tides. May they desire to sit beneath those trees of life which no storm shall shake.

Bless all churches, and schools, and seminaries of learning of every kind; and may all those who diffuse knowledge be themselves blessed of God. We pray for those who are distributing the word of life through books and newspapers. Sanctify, we pray thee, these great instruments of power in our land, and may they carry intelligence to the nobler part of man, and disown the things which minister to malice, to evil and to corruption. And we beseech of thee, if it must needs be that there shall be fire and burning, and

* Immediately following the baptism of children.

that excitement shall wax warm, that the comely things of truth may gain thereby. May poison weeds not grow. May the nature of Christian industry prune the vines and cause them to bear abundantly gracious clusters of divine truth. May all the overturnings, and collisions, and contentions, and disasters that afflict men be as the smith's hammer, and beat out those forms and uses which shall be for the benefit of men, and to the glory of God.

We pray that thou wilt spread abroad light and knowledge in all the earth. Lift up those nations that are cast down. Let the darkness flee away from the coming of the Sun of Righteousness. May the long night at last find its dawning, and the morning come, and thy predicted glory begin to move through the earth.

We pray that nations may learn war no more, and torment each other no more; and that the jealousy of the strong may no more tread under foot the weak. Grant that all nations may learn the royal law of divine love. Let thy kingdom come and let thy will be done upon earth as it is in heaven.

We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, open thy Word in our hearts. Write there the mystery of truth. Communicate thyself to us personally—to each as he needs. Be as gracious to us as the mother is to her little children, O our Father which art in heaven; and grant that we may so trust thee as that there shall not be a robber that can take away heaven or thee from us. If God be for us, who can be against us? Illumine the dark ways of life. Have pity on the ignorant and on the poor. Teach us to have pity. May we learn how to sacrifice ourselves as thou didst sacrifice thyself, and how to live for others as thou didst live for others. And when thou shalt have perfected thy work by the different processes by which thou art developing us, wilt thou be pleased to give us a glorious translation to that rest which remaineth for the people of God. And to thy name, O Father! O Lord Jesus! O Divine Spirit of comfort! we will give the praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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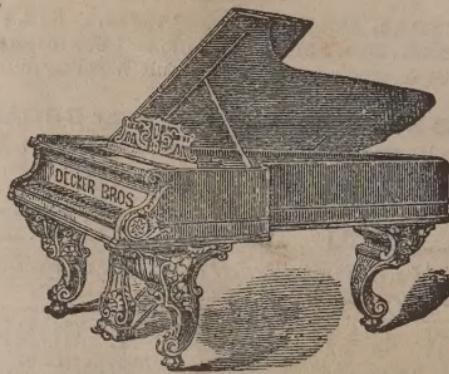
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